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AUTHOR Costley, Joan
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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on some of the "how to's" of professional development for the field of out-of-school programs. The paper examines some of the training experiments in the out-of-school time field and considers questions and issues that must be addressed to create an accessible, viable, and useful system of professional development for this field. Following an introduction, Section II of the paper introduces the elements of a professional development system (core knowledge base, career lattice or matrix, linked system of training programs, training approval system, and registry of practitioners and the training they have completed) and offers recommendations. Section III explores principles that provide important guidance for the establishment of such a system and offers recommendations, while Section IV discusses the creation of a core knowledge base and development of core competencies for the out-of-school time field. This section explores the examples of four such programs: Department of the Army/CDA, Chicago MOST and Chicago Youth Agency Partnership (CYAP) Competencies, Concordia Certificate and Degree Programs, and Karen VanderVen's Developmental Caring. Section V outlines the process of creating a continuum, or linked system, of training. The paper's conclusion notes that in the years ahead, as more programs are developed and as dynamic work on professional development in the out-of-school time field proceeds, much more work will remain to be done. (EV)

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Building a Professional Development System that Works for the Field of Out-of-School Time

Joan Costley

Wheelock College
Center for Career Development
in Early Care and Education

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I. Introduction: Why Professional Development?

Over the past 10 years, studies have proven the critical importance of quality out-of-school time programs for children and youth. Out-of-school time programs have been shown to be a significant factor in reducing the likelihood of kids getting into trouble, and in supporting social and emotional development. At the White House Conference on Child Care in October 1997, the President and the First Lady identified such programs as one of the key elements needed to create a broad-based support system for children/youth and their families.

At the same time, the support of the Federal Department of Education for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and nationwide concern about children's academic achievement has encouraged expanded roles for out-of-school time programs in relation to the concept of extended schools and school days. As a result, programs in many communities may be called upon to provide homework assistance, learning enhancement activities, and other kinds of school supports while still meeting the social, physical and emotional needs of elementary and middle school children.

Even as new and potential federal funding fuels the continuing growth of out-of-school time programs, the field is experiencing a nationwide staffing crisis. Existing positions are going unfilled, and turnover and low compensation are still major issues. In the midst of these practical realities, it may seem almost irrelevant to raise the issue of professional development[1] for out-of-school time program staff. Professional development is, however, one of the most important elements in the discussion about the future of the field.

Research has established that the most important element in creating quality programs is a workforce with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and meet the needs of children/youth. Thus, the out-of-school time field faces the challenge of how to furnish its workforce with access to high quality training that:

- enables staff members in all roles in the field to expand their knowledge, strengthen their skills, and move as far along a career path in the field as they desire;
- promotes and supports diversity in all roles in the field—making sure that the leadership of the field mirrors the children/youth and families being served; and
- ties increased compensation to gains in knowledge, providing an incentive for staff to stay in the field and continue to grow as professionals.

On the threshold of the 21st century, groups of committed program staff, community and college leaders, and business people are striving to help all members of the field "make a career" out of working in out-of-school time programs. Work to create a career development approach to training in the out-of-school time field has begun at the national level and in many states. New training programs have been developed. New professional development opportunities have

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[1]Preparation and continuing education that enables members of the field to develop knowledge and skills that improve performance in current roles and/or equip them to move, either vertically or laterally, into other roles. *Professional development* is also known as *career development*, and these terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

been designed and are being implemented, such as training programs and the accreditation system of the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA). And, NSACA is creating networks of practitioners in states and communities who are coming together to learn from one another and to identify needs and issues.

Supports for program improvement also exist through the work of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). NIOST is carrying out the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative in three cities—Boston, Chicago, and Seattle—with funding from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. The initiative is providing opportunities for planning and experimenting with training and credentialing systems for current out-of-school time program staff, and defining roles and careers for the field.

Two events sponsored by the MOST initiative have provided opportunities to explore professional development issues in greater depth and have supplied substantial ideas and material for this paper:

1. ***A groundbreaking event for the out-of-school time field***. MOST sponsored a full-day symposium, *Higher Education's Role in Developing and Linking Community-Based and College Training in Out-of-School Time Care: A Call to Action*, at the June 1997 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Institute for Professional Development Conference in Seattle. Between 120 and 170 participants, including out-of-school time program staff, college faculty members and administrators, and representatives of state government and national organizations gathered to explore many of the key questions that are at the heart of creating careers in the out-of-school time field.

2. ***A one-day invitational meeting in Boston in July 1997***. The invitational meeting, *Professional Development for the Out-of-School Time Field: Making the Link to Higher Education*, was linked to the MOST annual retreat and focused on issues and strategies involved in developing and implementing training at various levels in the area of higher education. Participants included: MOST staff members and representatives of two- and four-year colleges from the three cities; a team of higher education experts drawn from colleges and state higher education agencies around the country; and senior staff from NIOST and The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College.

These two events brought core issues of professional development to the attention of leaders within and outside of the out-of-school time field. The invitational meeting was an intensive effort to support the work of the MOST cities in developing college-level school-age courses by reviewing the current national context in higher education including program trends, changing demographics, assessment strategies, and the growing role of technology. The day focused on three key sets of issues: identifying the core knowledge base for the out-of-school time field; looking at the development of associate's and bachelor's degree programs for out-of-school time practitioners; and assessing the specific needs, issues, and political contexts of each of the three MOST cities. In successive rounds of panel discussion and work groups, participants worked together in varying combinations of constituencies, staff, and resource people to get the most effective and relevant input to the discussion about each issue.

While the MOST cities are providing laboratories for intensive work on developing new professional development models, there is great interest and enthusiasm across the field as a whole in working on these issues. It is in the context of the needs, hopes, opportunities, and energy that exist in the field that we turn to the question of how to best create standards, credentials, and training programs that will be linked to improved compensation to provide a real career ladder open to all.

In this paper, I focus on some of the "how to's" of professional development. I look at some of the training experiments in the out-of-school time field, and I consider some of the questions and issues that must be addressed to create an accessible, viable, and useful system of professional development for the out-of-school time field.

In Section II, I introduce the elements of a professional development system, and Section III explores a number of principles that provide important guidance for the establishment of such a system. In Section IV, I discuss the creation of a core knowledge base and development of core competencies for the out-of-school time field, and Section V outlines the process of creating a continuum—or linked system—of training.

II. The Elements of a Professional Development System for the Out-of-School Time Field

During the past 10 years, a great deal of thinking, planning, and effort has gone into addressing the professional development needs and issues of a cluster of related fields (e.g., early childhood, education, youth work, recreation, and family support). All of these fields share many of the same professional development issues and needs.

So far, the professional development efforts of people in the early childhood field and in youth work have been most prominent. In more than 40 states, early childhood practitioners have worked to bring to the table representatives from a broad range of constituencies and settings working with children and families: child care, Head Start, family child care, out-of-school time programs, and public schools. The youth work field has been going through a parallel effort largely at the national level.

With new federal funding that includes attention to program quality and training, the out-of-school time field has a major opportunity to make its presence and needs felt in the broader conversations about professional development. Significant resources are available to move a professional development agenda forward at the national, state, and local levels. In fact, in many states and communities out-of-school time practitioners have already been at the table helping to shape the dialogue. At a time of great opportunity, the field faces a double challenge to identify and meet its unique professional development needs (see pages seven through nine for more details) and learn how to join with, influence, and build on work that has already been done by related fields.

During the past 10 years, a growing number of states and communities seeking to create program quality and support for practitioners have turned to the idea of creating professional development systems. A professional development system is typically a broad-based training system with accessible, high quality training at many levels to meet the needs of current practitioners. It also sets quality standards for trainers and training, and provides recognition for practitioners.

Professional development systems have usually been created by the efforts of a broad-based planning group. The goal, in any case, is to bring together the widest possible range of representatives of programs and organizations that provide services to children and families or are concerned with supporting those efforts. Often a group is convened with the sponsorship of state government because of the availability of "quality improvement funds" set aside within the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). In other instances, the state Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), the child care resource and referral (CCR&R) network, or a group of colleges may initiate or convene a planning group from the state. These "stakeholder groups" do the primary work of planning and make ongoing efforts to get continuous feedback from grass roots groups and practitioners. More recently, individual communities in states that have not developed a state-level system are beginning to work on comparable systems for themselves.

The results of planning groups' work, what we call professional development systems, typically have five key components:

- a core knowledge base;
- a career ladder or matrix that provides links between roles, qualifications, and compensation;
- a clearly defined, linked system of training programs that meets the needs of people in the field at all stages of their careers;
- a set of standards to ensure the quality of training that is provided (often known as a training approval process); and
- a registry of members of the field and the training they have completed.

Core Knowledge Base

In any field, the core knowledge base[2] is the agreed-upon definition of what knowledge people need to have in order to do their jobs. The out-of-school time field is engaged in an ongoing conversation about its core knowledge base. Out-of-school time programs have elements in common with a variety of other fields that work with children and families, partly because of the wide age range of children— ages 5 to 14—being served in various settings and by various agencies. From some perspectives, out-of-school time programs are an extension of the education model of the school day, while from other perspectives they have been seen as social work, youth work, recreation, child care, or even family support and health services programs. Taking time to resolve the "identity" of the out-of-school time field, or the possibilities for variation, will play a

[2] In this paper, the terms *core knowledge areas* and *core knowledge base* refer to a set of topic areas that describe the knowledge needed by members of the field to work effectively with children/youth. Core knowledge areas are often used by states to define the content of training curriculum or delineate an amount of training an individual needs in a particular area.

key role in defining what members of the field should know in order to do their work well. In Section IV, I will take a closer look at several approaches to defining the core knowledge base and the questions they raise.

Career Lattice or Matrix

The career lattice is the shared definition by people in the field of the amount and kind of training and experience that people will need to be able to work in specific roles. The lattice helps to define the increased training and experience a person will need to move into a more responsible role, or to simply move into another role that requires different knowledge and skills.

For example, in establishing a career ladder/matrix, the field must determine:

- what knowledge and experience a program director needs that is more and/or different from what a beginning program assistant needs; and
- what knowledge and skills a group leader in an out-of-school time program needs that are different from those of a teacher in a preschool setting.

A well-designed career lattice should help to define compensation levels for different roles, training, and experience. A lattice should also show "career pathways" for people in the field, so that members of the field can identify the training and experience they need in order to move into more responsible or different roles in the field. Some interesting work has been done to begin to conceptualize a career matrix for out-of-school time practitioners. One example comes from one of the MOST cities, Boston, where staff members in a variety of roles in out-of-school time programs worked together with MOST staff and consultants from The Center for Career Development to develop a career matrix for out-of-school time providers.

Linked System of Training Programs

In a career development system, training programs must:

- meet the needs of staff members in a range of roles, at different levels of responsibility, and with varying amounts of experience in the field;
- be built around the core knowledge base, skills, and experience needed to work in different roles in that field;
- help people move from one level of knowledge to another—from introductory training to training for advanced levels of knowledge;
- be linked or articulated so that members of the field who are trying to move ahead do not find themselves having to back up and start over in order to train for a new role or position; and
- address the needs of diverse staff by incorporating anti-bias content and including trainers from diverse backgrounds.

Ideally, every training experience that an individual has completed at one level should be useful and "count" toward the next credential or degree s/he may need to move on into a new position or take on one with greater responsibilities.

For example, a practitioner who participates in a high quality training program offered through a CCR&R or other community agency should have the option to receive college credit then or later, by demonstrating what s/he has learned from the training program. In Section V, I will look more in depth at the issues and needs in the out-of-school time field for developing a linked system of training programs.

Training Approval System

A field ensures quality standards for its training and trainers by utilizing a training approval system. Training approval is an essential tool for states and communities to make sure that the content of training is up-to-date, accurate, and presented in ways that are clear and useful to trainees. In practice, this has meant that states or communities have created written and published guidelines for the content and design of training. States have also created Trainer Registries to enable groups that are planning training to identify which individuals have been approved as trainers. Some states have used trainer and training approval as a "seal of quality" to help practitioners find the best training. Other states have mandated that only training offered by an approved trainer will be accepted by their career development systems, and, in some cases, will meet state licensing requirements for training.

Registry of Practitioners and the Training They Have Completed

Creating a Registry in which each staff member and his/her qualifications can be listed and periodically updated is another key element of professional development systems. Registries provide essential documentation and recognition for members of the field. In states that have created Registries, many are operated for a broad group of staff (including employees of child care centers, Head Start, out-of-school time programs, and family child care providers). The Registry may be operated by any government or community organization that can handle the task effectively for the field. Current examples include state licensing agencies, a community or four-year college, a statewide CCR&R network or individual agency, or a statewide professional organization.

Each practitioner is able to have all training s/he completes, whether it is workshops, Continuing Education Units (CEUs), or college courses entered in the Registry. A growing number of states are creating special credentials or other forms of recognition to mark the completion of specific amounts of training, or to acknowledge that an individual is qualified to be employed in a specific role.

States and communities have also started out with smaller scale approaches to a Registry. In Oklahoma and Washington, career development planning groups distributed booklets identifying core knowledge areas and training requirements or recommendations in each area for people in different roles. This strategy enabled practitioners to understand the range of knowledge they need and to make more useful and less repetitious choices from the available training offerings.

Recommendations

⇒ Find out whether there is a statewide career development planning group in your state. If there is, find out whether out-of-school time practitioners are part of the group. If they are, make sure that you let them know about your needs and concerns. If there are no out-of-school time representatives, get involved in identifying one or more out-of-school time people to join the group.

⇒ Make sure that any career development planning work in your state is based on a core knowledge base that includes out-of-school time needs. Many groups work on developing this part of the system first, because it then provides the basis for setting up a career ladder, as well as for designing training approval, the Registry, and providing the career ladder/matrix for linking training programs.

⇒ Find out whether a training approval system is in place in your state. If not, find out whether one is being planned. If it isn't, find out why not and get people to work on one.

⇒ Find out whether there is a Registry in place in your state. If not, find out whether one is being planned. If not, get people to work on one. Start by calling your state chapter of NSACA.

⇒ If there is no state-level career development planning group in your state, you can begin to work on some of these issues within your own community. Convene a diverse group of people that represents the full range of people and programs in your community, including service providers, CCR&Rs, colleges, licensors, and public officials.

III. Key Principles for a Professional Development System

A number of principles provide important guidance for the establishment of a professional development system. In the out-of-school time field, it is important to address these principles because the expectations set by regulations in most states either do not exist or are far below what we now know is necessary to provide quality programs to meet the needs of children/youth and their families.

First, there are principles that cut across efforts to build professional development systems for any field that has to meet the needs of a diverse group of people entering it at different job levels and with varying amounts of training. These principles are also essential for any field in which many, or even most, of the people working in it will need to receive most of their training after they have begun to work. These principles include:

- Training must be based on a clear and agreed-upon core knowledge base for the field.
- Training must have a clear sequence from entry-level to advanced.
- All training must count toward some kind of licensing requirement, credential, or degree.
- All credentials and degrees must be linked so that practitioners do not have to repeat training.

- Training programs must provide opportunities for participants to get credit for what they already know.
- Increased training must be linked to increased compensation.
- Training should be designed to meet the needs of a racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse group of practitioners.
- Training should be made available at times, locations, and in formats that make it accessible to a broad range of people.

In addition to these principles, several ideas have special significance for the out-of-school time field. As the field struggles with how to enable more of its members to attain permanent careers in out-of-school time programs, it is clear that there seem to be three major categories of people who work in out-of-school time programs:

- ***The Permanent Professional***—This is someone who may have arrived in the field as a specialist or a short-term staff member, but who has made a serious commitment to making a career and remaining in the field. This is typically the person we think of when credentials and substantial training programs are being designed.

- ***The Specialist***—This is the person who comes into out-of-school time programs with expertise in a specific area, usually adding depth and vitality to the program's curriculum. This might be a sports specialist or coach, a drama or art teacher, or a science major who loves doing experiments and activities with the children/youth.

- ***The Short-Term Staff Member***—This might be a college student who becomes involved in an after-school program as part of a service learning project, as a work-study job, or a summer job. It might also be someone from the community who has taken a job with the program, but does not have any career goals in mind. This person may not become permanently committed to the work, but even as someone who may be working with the children/youth for only months, or even a year or two, needs to have some knowledge and skills.

One of the challenges facing the out-of-school time field will be developing enough high quality training programs to meet the disparate needs of all of these individuals—teachers, group leaders, counselors, specialists, coaches, assistants, site coordinators, and program directors. New roles will constantly emerge as the field continues to define itself.

Another challenge will be to determine how much training people in all three categories may need in order to work effectively with children/youth and families, without expecting more than is reasonable. Clearly, for the out-of-school time field, one size does not, and should not, fit all. The specialist and the short-term staff member both enrich the program for a while, but may go on to other work after a fairly short time. They need some basic orientation and inspiration from beginning training. The permanent group leaders and various levels of administrators are the professional staff who are essential to building quality ongoing programs for children/youth. College coursework, degrees, and credentials are designed for these permanent roles.

If different kinds of training can be provided to meet the needs of these different groups of people, this kind of staffing mix can provide rich resources for out-of-school time programs. If we can develop successful strategies for training and supporting the staff members who see themselves as permanent, or are interested in that possibility, we can create a cadre of people who become the backbone of the program, and can become trainers and mentors for others.

Recommendations

⇒ Begin to look at the non-credit training programs in your community. Are they based on a knowledge base for the out-of-school time field? How do they line up with the principles described above? If they don't, think about convening a meeting of out-of-school time staff and directors to find out how they feel about the training they have been getting.

⇒ Try to plan a meeting with the organizations that have been providing training to talk about ways to create a system of training based on the principles listed above. Think about creating one or more workshop series that give staff an opportunity to learn more about a particular topic.

⇒ If there is a career development planning group or even an existing system in your state, make sure that your local training provider knows about it and is participating in, or is planning to participate in, the training approval system.

⇒ Find out whether the career development group has designed any materials to provide guidance to your staff about what topic areas they should seek training in. If your state has a booklet, or a tracking sheet share it with your staff. If not, suggest they design one. If there is no state-level group, convene a group of trainers, practitioners, and planners in your area to design one that can be used by all staff in your area.

⇒ Help your staff begin to see how their training might line up with and apply toward credentials other than your state licensing requirements. Is your state planning to issue out-of-school time licenses or certificates for individual practitioners? Can you help to create one?

⇒ Evaluate the two- and four-year colleges in your area. Do they offer courses that are relevant to the needs of people in the out-of-school time field? Even if courses do not specifically mention out-of-school time programs, they may have a great deal of content that is relevant. Look in departments of child and human development, family studies, human or social services, recreation, family support, and youth work as well as in education.

⇒ If you find some promising courses, talk with the instructor about how to make them more relevant and accessible to the needs of out-of-school time personnel.

⇒ Meet with representatives of both two- and four-year colleges to talk about the training needs of out-of-school time practitioners. Learn the colleges' systems for developing and accrediting new courses. Talk with college representatives about how to pull together existing courses and resources from a range of departments in order to create a program.

IV. Creating the Core Knowledge Base and Developing Core Competencies for the Out-of-School Time Field

Creating a core knowledge base for the out-of-school time field has vital implications for the future of training and credentialing of people in the field. As alluded to earlier, the task of establishing a core knowledge base revolves around developing a common definition for the out-of-school time field.

In creating its core knowledge base, the field will need to decide if it is necessary to define out-of-school time programs and work as something separate and unique or if it is more valuable to see them as a combination of important aspects of one or more other fields. The field will also need to determine whether out-of-school time programs are providing:

- Education
- Health care
- Recreation
- Social work
- Youth work
- Child care
- Health services
- Family support
- Aspects of all of the above

The answers to these questions will shape the content and source of training for members of the field, the kinds of credentials and degrees they should seek and earn, and even determine the range of associations they join and the relationships they develop with other professionals.

Right now, there are at least four exciting and somewhat different approaches to defining core competencies[3] which were highlighted and discussed extensively at the June 1997 NAEYC Symposium, *Higher Education's Role in Developing and Linking Community-Based and College Training in Out-of-School Time Care: A Call to Action*. There are, of course, many more individual training programs that exist around the country. Each of the following ideas or programs represents a different way of answering the question "What does an out-of-school time practitioner need to know?"

- The Department of the Army Youth Services branch has designed and implemented an out-of-school time credential modeled after the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- Chicago MOST with the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership (CYAP) has worked with an approach that includes a strong component of youth work.

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[3] The terms *competencies* or *core competencies* refer to a set of observable skills needed by members of the field. Although this concept is similar to that of *core knowledge*, when states use competencies to develop training curricula, they often set goals or outcomes for the training or develop mechanisms for the demonstration and assessment of a practitioner's skills.

- Concordia College in Minnesota has developed an out-of-school time major for its bachelor's degree program. The major has five core areas which draw on concepts and competencies from the fields of education, recreation, health, and social work.
- Karen VanderVen, of the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, has been working on a concept of "developmental caring" that cuts across the knowledge base and skills needed by people who work in any kind of "care setting" (residential or community) that involves children, adolescents, or adults.

Department of the Army/CDA

The Army training plan and credential establishes 60 units of training distributed over four levels that culminate in the Army credential. Staff members are expected to complete the first eight units prior to their first work assignment, and then the remaining three levels within three, nine, and eighteen months of hiring. The matrix for the training overall is very similar to the thirteen competency areas defined within the CDA and addresses: health issues; environments; physical development; guidance and discipline; social development; cognitive development; creativity; self-esteem; program management; working with families; and professionalism. Specific training on child abuse is also included, as well as first aid and CPR.

Chicago MOST and Chicago Youth Agency Partnership (CYAP) Competencies

This set of competencies is based on a deliberate effort to draw from and bridge the fields of out-of-school time care, early childhood, youth development, and social work. It establishes 12 categories of competencies and then makes distinctions between the specific knowledge and skills needed in each one when the practitioner is working with five-year-olds to twelve-year-olds, or with children and youth between the ages of nine to 21. The categories are in many respects similar to those of the CDA, but they use specific language and definitions for individual competencies that reflect their roots in one of the four fields the planning group studied. The categories include: safety; child and youth development; group work; child and youth activities; family and community resources; diversity; contemporary issues (forces in society that affect the lives of children/youth and their families); organizational mission; program measurement and celebration; communication; leadership; and professional work skills.

Concordia Certificate and Degree Programs

As one of the few colleges in the country that has already developed and is offering a degree with a concentration in out-of-school time programs, the faculty and staff at Concordia feel that they have drawn very heavily on the four related fields of education, recreation, social work, and health. They describe the curriculum of their degree program as being based on five core areas: promoting healthy development; promoting social development; social skills; adult-child interaction; and "red flags" to negative development (indicators of possible special needs). All courses in the program are based on aspects or combinations of these core knowledge areas.

Karen VanderVen: Developmental Caring

Karen VanderVen's work represents a deliberate attempt to find the broadest categories and definitions for the areas of knowledge and skill that adults need to be effective with children and their families. She is attempting to organize all of this information by identifying what she sees as the three major elements of the picture:

- child outcomes;
- the attributes or qualities of the adult in the situation; and
- what information is needed and how it is used to meet the needs of the child.

Karen VanderVen's ideas suggest that the most important part of the knowledge base is to be deeply rooted in understanding the development of the person at different stages in life. For example, with her approach, a practitioner would learn in-depth about early childhood development, or youth development, or adult development and would focus their work on one of those three developmental stages. The practitioner, because of his/her deep understanding of development, would be able to determine how to respond to the child, the youth, or the adult in a range of settings.

Clearly, there are important issues to resolve in creating a core knowledge base for the out-of-school time field. The following are some questions that must be addressed and that have strong implications for the future development of the out-of-school time field and the preparation of its workforce:

1. ***Does the definition of the core knowledge base meet the needs of current and future practitioners?***

The out-of-school time field encompasses programs that have grown up under many different kinds of sponsorship and reflect their historical and philosophical bases. There are programs taking place in schools, YMCAs and YWCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, city recreation departments, public libraries, and other community agencies. Each of these programs illustrates a variation of the answer to how we think children/youth should spend their out-of-school time and what resources we can make available.

At the June 1997 NAEYC symposium, however, focus groups of members of the field had surprisingly consistent answers to the question, "What is the core knowledge base for the field?" These individuals largely represented programs that had an education, child care, or recreation base. Few programs with a youth work focus were represented. The groups at the conference agreed on a number of elements:

- the importance of understanding child and youth development;
- the ability to provide programs and activities that are developmentally appropriate;
- the importance of addressing the full range of health, social, intellectual, and emotional needs

of the children/youth;
- understanding the family issues of the children/youth; and
- knowing how to use the resources of the community to follow-up with the needs of children/youth.

2. ***How do we identify a knowledge base that is really applicable to the broad range of ages and settings that out-of-school time programs embrace?***

If we retain a focus on understanding and meeting the needs of children and youth in the context of their family and community life, we seem to have a broad enough statement. However, many training programs put a great deal of emphasis on teaching skills to be used in specific settings, rather than helping people to learn how to observe, assess, and develop strategies and activities to respond to specific children's needs.

3. ***How do we translate the "languages" of different settings/fields to achieve a common denominator?***

It is surprising how different fields of practice become like sub-cultures. When someone enters a new field, one of the hallmarks of demonstrating belonging is to be able to understand and use the "lingo," verbal shorthand, unique to that field.

One of the challenges of this process will be to actively explore the terminology of several different fields/settings to identify the commonalties in meaning and program content. In doing so, we may discover shared values and content obscured by field-specific terms. For example, such a study might reveal that "activities" in recreation, "programs" in education, and "group work" in youth work share much of the same core knowledge base.

4. ***Can we identify core knowledge that cuts across all variations of out-of-school time programs?***

All of the different ideas we have described above place a heavy emphasis on understanding child development and on understanding how to develop activities in response to a child's interests and needs. In addition, most of the models also identify three other elements:

- understanding the child in the context of his/her family;
- understanding the child in the context of his/her community; and
- understanding the child in the context of his/her culture and society.

A fourth element, one that has probably been more thought out in the areas of youth work and social work, concerns the kind of relationship a practitioner in an out-of-school time program should have with the children/youth, their families, and their communities. This means deciding how much responsibility the practitioner should feel s/he has for what happens to the children/youth and families outside the time and space of the out-of-school time program, and when and how to become involved in other aspects of their lives.

5. ***How do we balance the need to create a core knowledge base, training, and credentials that appropriately define the out-of-school time field with the need to "fit" somewhere within the existing structures of colleges and credentials?***

One of the realities of the current situation in higher education is that many colleges are resource starved. For almost 20 years, the federal government has cut back on aid to higher education. Legislatures in the states have been expected to take up the slack, and have responded differently according to the history and politics of that state.

It can be very difficult to ask a college to create a new concentration or major for a degree program if that college is in the midst of a resource freeze, or if departments within the college are battling each other for faculty and staff positions.

6. ***What should the direction be for designing a core knowledge base and training programs?***

During the past three or four years, a new and important trend towards the development of interdisciplinary training programs has been taking shape across the country. The original motivation for the development of such programs were the perceptions of community groups, government agencies, and local and national foundations that traditionally trained professionals did not know how to be effective when a child or a family presented a complex problem that crossed the boundaries of their training.

There has been a national call for a new approach to training people to work with children/youth and families, to cut across the disciplines of education, health, social work, and public administration. A small number of such programs had already existed as experiments, some for as long as 20 years; but during the past three years they have been growing in number at a startling rate.

The out-of-school time field can build on this trend by working with colleges to build inter-departmental or inter-disciplinary degree programs based on existing courses and resources from the fields of education, health, social work, youth services, and recreation as well as sociology, psychology, and anthropology.

V. Creating a Linked System of Training

In creating a linked system of training—or "continuum of professional development"—the field needs to ensure that training at each level of the training system:

- corresponds to the needs of some roles and positions in the field and fully prepares a person for those roles;
- counts toward meeting some of the requirements for training at the next level; and
- corresponds to any existing and recognized credentials in the field.

It is no secret that much of the training that has been available does not meet these challenges. In many states, work in professional development in the out-of-school time field and in early childhood has been helping practitioners, planners, and advocates begin to assess how well the training in their states does meet these challenges and begin to create an integrated, or continuous, system.

Five areas of training and/or assessment of learning represent the key pieces of the puzzle:

- High school training programs
- Community-based, non-credit training
- College certificates and degrees
- Independent learning/assessment of prior learning
- Distance learning

All five of these elements need to be knitted together to create a continuous system. There are already examples in many states of successful linkages that have been established between two or more steps, and a growing number of states are nearing the establishment of a complete system.

- ***High School Training Programs***—Articulation of high school training for college credit is actually provided for by Federal education and funding policy through the vocational education act. High schools that offer courses, and even fieldwork experiences, to students who want to learn about working with children and families are establishing agreements with community colleges. As a result, their students can receive anywhere from six to nine college credits for their high school coursework if they go on to enroll at a community college. Such arrangements are often known as 2+2 programs. Currently existing versions of such programs seem to focus on classroom and field experiences with children from birth to age five, but out-of-school time professionals should explore this as an option.

- ***Community-Based, Non-Credit Training***—Part of the work of career development planning groups in many states has been to establish content and quality guidelines for transforming community-based, non-credit training offered by community agencies into college credits. The existence and use of these standards has helped to make it possible to transform specific numbers of hours of approved training in defined core knowledge areas into college credit that counts toward a certificate or degree. In Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Montana, Idaho, and Delaware, colleges have worked with community agencies to plan and offer training in a variety of formats to meet a variety of needs, including: meeting licensing requirements; fulfilling CDA training requirements; or earning college credit for a degree program. Some colleges have adapted their existing courses into workshop series offered in the community, while some community organizations have offered training in traditional or distance learning formats that could later earn college credit. In some of these states, practitioners have the option of deciding up to two years later whether or not to seek college credit. In Connecticut, the career development system will be issuing certificates through its Registry as individuals complete 10, 20, 30, and 60 hours of core knowledge-based, approved, non-credit,

community-based training. When they accumulate 120 hours of training, practitioners will be able to take the certificates to a college of their choice to transform the hours for college credit.

- ***College Certificates and Degrees***—Institutionalized linkages across college programs is also known as articulation of college programs. Articulation affects members of the field in two ways. First, articulation means that within the same college every level of training counts toward the next level. In other words, if the college has a certificate program any credits a student earns in that program will also count toward any degree offered by that college. Articulation also means that two colleges or a group of colleges agree to accept each other's credits or degrees, enabling a student to apply credits or degrees earned at one institution to their matriculation at another college. For example, a person who completes an associate's degree at one college that involved completing 60-63 credits should be able to have all or almost all of those credits count toward a bachelor's degree at another college in the same field. The issue of articulation has been a very difficult one for many years, not only for the field of out-of-school time care or early childhood but also for many of the professional fields. Through the efforts of career development planning groups, or other groups interested in developing training options in their states and communities, we have begun to see some important changes take place on a state-by-state or sometimes college-by-college basis over the past 10 years.

- ***Assessment of Prior Learning/Independent Learning***—Assessment of prior learning is an option provided by colleges for an individual to demonstrate knowledge and skills s/he has already gained before coming to the college. It is a much broader approach to getting college credit and works particularly well for people who may not have documentation of prior training, or who participated in training that would not be recognized by the college. Typically, the individual selects one or more courses to "challenge" because it seems to match well with what the individual already knows. A faculty member at the college sets up opportunities for the individual to demonstrate his/her knowledge, through some appropriate technique (e.g., a portfolio, a paper, an exam prepared by the individual, or observation of the individual demonstrating his/her skills at work). Assessment of prior learning is a key strategy that has been part of the credentialing process for many years in other fields. It has been brought into the areas of early childhood and out-of-school time training through the efforts of career development planning groups in many states. More than one-third of the colleges in the country provide this option, and the numbers have grown rapidly during the past five years.

- ***Distance Learning***—There is a great deal of excitement about the development of training options on the Internet and through correspondence, video, and interactive television. The National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) is already working with a national distance learning company to put courses online from colleges all over the country. The great advantage of online courses is the enormous flexibility it provides for people who are juggling multiple responsibilities. As we continue to create training systems, it will be important to factor in the current and potential role of such courses and programs.

VI. Conclusion

In addition to the programs already discussed, there are already a number of fine examples of non-credit and college credit training programs for out-of-school time practitioners scattered around the country. Some of these include:

- the Apex program in Boston, a five-course certificate program that is being developed as the core concentration for a college degree;
- certificate programs at Harold Washington Community College in Chicago, and associate's degree programs;
- a CDA program at Clover Park Technical College in Colorado;
- college credit for school-age care (SAC) family child care providers in Boston and in New Jersey;
- a mentor teacher program at Seattle Central Community College;
- undergraduate service learning at UC-Irvine in California;
- an interdisciplinary training program in British Columbia, Canada; and
- distance learning and bachelor's and master's degree programs at Concordia College in Minnesota.

In the years ahead, as more programs are developed and as dynamic work on professional development in the out-of-school time field proceeds, much more remains to be done. Many more people are needed to attract attention and create visibility for the needs of people in the out-of-school time field. And, the field needs to engage parents in the effort and link with colleagues in other segments of fields that serve children/youth and families.

Perhaps most importantly, we must remain aware that the issue of professional development cannot proceed in a vacuum. At a time when it is more difficult than ever to fill staff vacancies, and compensation is far from adequate, it may seem like a luxury to talk about "professionalizing" the field. One of the most effective things we can do is to link increased training to increased wages and benefits, so that the emphasis on professionalism can be seen as a way to reward people who stay in the field and continue to build their knowledge and skill.

The history of other fields, including public school teaching and nursing, has shown that as more training and credentials have become expected and even required, the level of compensation and recognition has risen. Some are concerned that the path for the "caring" fields will be more difficult because of the historical disregard for caring and for what is seen as "women's work." As other changes in our society attack gender discrimination these issues may lessen. In the meantime, there is clear evidence from research data that training is necessary to provide quality programs for children/youth and their families. We must communicate the message that quality can only be had at a price—that of appropriate compensation.

Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST)

How do we make the most of out-of-school time for our nation's children? This is the question at the heart of the MOST Initiative, a multi-million dollar project supported by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (DWRD), and designed in partnership with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)* at the Wellesley Centers for Women. MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) seeks to improve the quality and availability of programming for children and youth in Boston, Chicago, and Seattle during the hours they are not in school. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time, with 20 years of action research and expertise in the field of school-age care, provides coordination and technical assistance to the Initiative.

MOST employs a **community-based, collaborative** approach toward improving the quality and quantity of out-of-school services for children and youth, especially those from low-income families. This strategy creates the opportunity to develop local capacity to provide leadership, resources and commitment to children's out-of-school time, and to develop an infrastructure capable of supporting a system of school-age care. As the infrastructure expands, strengthens, and new relationships are formed, there is potential for **systems change** to occur. The community now has the capacity to conduct planning, create partnerships and raise and expand resources to help all children access affordable, enriching opportunities during their non-school time. The multiple goals and activities of MOST are key to initiating and driving systems change that allows for long-term **sustainability**. These four concepts highlighted above—community based, collaborative, systems change, and sustainability, are the building blocks of MOST. They provide the conceptual framework and foundation for the myriad of efforts underway in all three MOST cities.

In 1994, DWRD launched the MOST Initiative by selecting cities to receive one-year planning grants. During this **planning year**, community-based coalitions developed Action Plans to address the following **national goals** for out-of-school time programs:

- Start and/or improve programs;
- Increase the numbers of children served;
- Increase professional development and in-service training opportunities for providers;
- Increase public awareness of the need for services;
- Develop resources to sustain the project's goals.

** formerly the School-Age Child Care Project*

In each city, Action Plans were developed through an intensive collaborative process that allowed for community members to assess needs, develop strategies, and generate substantial matching funds. Three cities--**Boston, Chicago, and Seattle**--received grants in May 1995, of $1.2 million each for implementation of their three-year plan. Under the umbrella of one or more lead agencies, the MOST cities developed a governance structure to engage a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., school-age administrators and staff, city officials, parents, large youth-serving agencies, religious organizations, higher education institutions, public schools, etc.) to meet the goals of the Initiative. Although each city worked from similar goals, their action plans were quite different, reflecting the unique needs, priorities and resources of each city.

Staff at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time work closely with each community to provide technical assistance and training support. They facilitate communication and sharing of experiences between the MOST cities, and gather and disseminate information related to the Initiative at the national level. In the first phase of the Initiative, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund has supported collaborations between NIOST and two national organizations: the Wheelock College Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education to provide technical assistance in professional development, and the National School-Age Care Alliance to work on the program improvement and accreditation pilot. The Chapin Hall Center for the Study of Children is conducting a multi-year evaluation of the MOST Initiative. In the second phase, the Finance Project, based in Washington DC, received a planning grant to partner with NIOST in exploring a variety of financial strategies to help sustain the MOST Initiative in participating cities, and in other communities seeking to address similar issues.

Early findings from an ongoing evaluation of the MOST Initiative show that the three cities are making progress in their efforts to improve the quality and availability of school-age care, especially for families in low-income communities. Some early results include:

- Approximately 6,000 new school-age care spaces have been created through the initiative.
- More than $2 million in additional funds have been raised by the cities to support this work.
- Hundreds of staff have received training to improve their skills for providing care for school-age youth.
- In the three cities, the scope of services and range of programs available to families has been expanded by partnerships with park districts, schools, youth-serving organizations, cultural institutions and others.

As a result of these preliminary findings, in 1998 the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund awarded an additional $3.3 million to help Boston, Chicago, and Seattle extend their efforts to develop community-wide systems for providing before- and after-school care for 5 to 14 year olds, and to share lessons from this work with other cities.

City Accomplishments

Boston MOST: In Boston, the MOST Initiative has:

- Provided staff development opportunities through trainings, forums, a directors' support group, and a program improvement support group;
- Supported 31 SACC staff working toward an associates degree that includes the APEX Certificate in School Age Child Care;
- Taken a leading role in a Statewide SACC Professional Development Committee which is developing a statewide system of professional development that is linked to compensation;
- Increased access for low and moderate income families by 1500 slots by awarding multi-year Affordability Grants to more than 142 programs in 16 neighborhoods;
- Provided $463,000 in facilities grants to 9 programs in 1998: four expansion grants created 133 new after-school slots, and five grants supported critical facility improvements;
- Supported program start-up through an initiative to provide training, technical assistance, and start-up grant awards to elementary and middle schools; and
- Supported Americorps members working on quality improvement initiatives focused on literacy, inclusion and cultural competency, and developed and supported a team of Quality Advisors who provide technical assistance to programs working on quality improvement.

Chicago MOST: In Chicago, the MOST Initiative has:

- Provided staff development opportunities for over 900 school-age professionals through training, college courses, conferences and tuition reimbursement;
- Developed school-age/youth worker competencies to create a set of standards for working with children;
- Awarded program improvement grants to out-of-school time programs enhancing cultural and educational opportunities for more than 8,000 school-age children;
- Partnered with Chicago Park District to create 41 Park Kids programs for over 4,000 children;
- Strengthened the capacities of over 200 diverse out-of-school time providers through "Neighborhood Networking" open houses to create linkages with cultural institutions, community-based organizations and neighborhood businesses;
- Collaborated with the Illinois Facilities Fund to improve school-age program indoor environments through "makeovers" and published a space planning manual based on lessons learned;
- Implemented the Quality Improvement Project for thirteen school-age programs that includes technical assistance, training and a program improvement grant.

Seattle MOST: In Seattle, the MOST Initiative has:

- Increased program accessibility for low-income children and youth particularly from immigrant and refugee families by creating and expanding out-of-school time programs that meet their needs;
- Helped Seattle families find quality out-of-school time programs by developing a youth activities database on the Internet and distributing 35,000 printed directories listing programs by neighborhood;
- Expanded professional development options and improved skills for staff through college classes, mentor projects, community workshops and on-site training;
- Strengthened partnerships between schools and out-of-school time programs by jointly designing dedicated school-age care space and by training staff to infuse recreational reading strategies into their out-of-school time programs; and
- Raised public awareness and community involvement in supporting out-of-school time care and its positive outcomes.

Publications by the MOST Initiative

Homework Assistance and Out-of-School Time: Filling the Need, Finding a Balance

Building a Professional Development System for the Field of Out-of-School Time
Credentialing in Out-of-School Time Programs
Growing Together: Connections Between School Age Care and Youth Work Professions
Twelve Key Elements for Higher Education Training

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** Contact the MOST Initiative **

Joyce Shortt
Project Director
National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02481
phone: (781) 283-2526
fax: (781) 283-3657
jshortt@wellesley.edu

Leonette Coates
Chicago MOST Coordinator
Day Care Action Council of Illinois
4753 N. Broadway, Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60640
phone: (773) 564-8872
fax: (773) 561-2256
chgomost@interaccess.com

Laura Gang
Boston MOST Coordinator
Parents United for Child Care
30 Winter Street, 7th floor
Boston, MA 02108-4720
phone: (617) 426-8288
fax: (617) 542-1515
gang@pucc.com

Adrienne Bloom
Seattle MOST Coordinator
School's Out Consortium / YWCA
1118 5th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
phone: (206) 461-3602
fax: (206) 461-4860
abloom@ywcaworks.org

World Wide Web Homepage
www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/